AGENDA ITEM VII E

PROGRESS REPORT ON CONDITIONALLY APPROVED PROGRAM

LOUISIANA TECHNICAL COLLEGE -ASCENSION CAMPUS

ASSOCIATE OF APPLIED SCIENCE IN PROCESS TECHNOLOGY

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At its meeting of September 24, 2003, the Board of Regents took the following action:

> **Conditional approval is granted for the proposed A.A.S. program in Process Control Technology (CIP Code 15.0699) at Louisiana Technical College-Ascension, effective immediately. By August 1, 2004, the College shall submit to the Commissioner of Higher Education a report addressing weaknesses and problematic areas identified in the staff summary and analysis.**

Subsequently, the Regents approved the following in October 2004:

> **The Board of Regents receives the AY 2003-04 Progress Report from Louisiana Technical College - Ascension Campus relative to the implementation of the A.A.S. in Process Technology. By September 1, 2005, the institution shall submit a progress report to the Commissioner of Higher Education addressing concerns sited in the staff summary. In particular, this report should contain significant evidence of substantial and sustained student interest in the program.**

On October 27, 2005, the Regents acted as indicated:

> **The Board of Regents receives the AY 2004-2005 Report Relative to the Implementation of the A.A.S. in Process Technology at the Louisiana Technical College-Ascension. By September 1, 2006, the institution shall submit a progress report to the Commissioner of Higher Education documenting numbers of program graduates and the placement of students who left the program for employment.**

Information was received from the LTC-Ascension in August, 2006. The staff requested additional information, which the institution provided.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Students/ Recent Graduates

The institution indicates an increase in students enrolled in its P-Tech program and recent graduates, as indicated below.

Students	Fall 2005	Spring 2006	Summer 06	Fall 2006	Spring 2007
Full-time	40	41	23	46	
Part-time	6	20	0	19	
Ptec 101*	16	11	0	23	
Interns	0	2	4	2	
Scholarships	9	7	6	9	
Graduates	0	2	1	3	9**

* taught at Dutchtown High School
** anticipated

2. Placement

Three students were hired as process operators upon graduation at the average rate of $20/hour. Of these, one student who had been working in industry while in school was hired by another company following graduation and received a $10/hour pay increase.

Five students were employed by industry prior to completion of requirements for the AAS degree. For the two for which pay rates were provided, salaries were equivalent to that of graduates.

3. Completion of Facilities

The institution reports that the Glass Lab "E" Simulation was completed with Tech Prep funds. Eighteen additional simulation modules of units, equipment, instrumentation, new computers, acrylic mockups, demonstrators, cut-away and pump cavitation trainers were acquired with $100,000 in Carl Perkins Leadership Grant funds. A portable building was obtained for a classroom and Glass Lab "A" was upgraded for Field Bus technology (latest in wiring) utilizing Incumbent Worker funding and an industry donation.

4. Class Scheduling/Recommended Semester Sequence

Students are directed to schedule technical and general education courses each semester. A list of pre-requisites for P-Tech courses was provided, as well as recommended semester sequences of courses for full-time and part-time evening students. Students are now advised by the P-Tech lead instructor when registering for courses.

5. Criteria for Employment

The staff requested that the institution examine academic records of students to determine what level of education is required before employment. LTC-Ascension reported that "completion of P-Tech courses (not specified) and work experience are needed."

6. Rate of Program Completion

The staff observed that an average of 31 and 39 students per year have graduated from the A.A.S. programs in P-Tech at Baton Rouge Community College and SOWELA Technical Community College respectively over the last five years, while at the time of the report there had been only 6 graduates from the program at LTC-Ascension since its implementation in the fall of 2003. The staff requested suggestions for fostering completion of the AAS program at LTC-Ascension.

The institution advised that a graduation rate of 30-35 % of students enrolled in P-Tech courses at BRCC and SOWELA will be comparable to the anticipated improved graduation rate at LTC-Ascension, due to improved advising/scheduling and encouragement from faculty and industry.

7. Industry Support/Scholarships

The staff observed that the P-Tech program in Sorrento enjoys excellent financial support from local industry, as evidenced by the offering of nine scholarships and recent donations of equipment valued at approximately $50,000. Area industries are well represented on the P-tech Advisory Board.

The institution reports that the need for process technicians in the area is expected to increase and that the support of local industries will continue.

8. Need for the A.A.S. Degree

The staff suggested that a technical diploma might be sufficient for industry needs and requested that the institution address why a diploma would not be an appropriate exit point for process technology as well as an official position from the Advisory Committee on the necessity of completing the A.A.S. degree for employment.

The institution reports that the Gulf Coast Process Technology Association recognizes only the Associate of Applied Science degree, not a technical diploma in Process Technology. Following the last meeting of the P-Tech Advisory Committee on November 27, 2006, an "official position" on hiring of P-Tech student prior to graduation, was taken by the Committee. It advocates that students complete the requirements for the A.A.S. in Process Technology as a condition for employment. The curriculum was developed to meet the educational demands of the processing industry. The Committee states that the skill levels required are compatible with an A.A.S. degree; an abbreviated curriculum such as a diploma would not satisfy the needs of most employers.

However, because the current demand for process technicians far outweighs the number of program graduates, there are times when students may choose to leave the curriculum prior to graduation or to seek employment while completing requirements for the AAS degree. Industry hiring practices in the State do not have a requirement for the degree. Companies who have supported the development of the P-Tech program fully appreciate the benefits of the degree and encourage students to continue their educations.

STAFF SUMMARY

The A.A.S. program in Process Technology at LTC Ascension continues to develop appropriately. However, the number of graduates in the first three years of the program's existence remains distressingly low. It appears to the staff that the primary purpose of a degree program—to produced fully educated graduates—is not being fulfilled in this case. While the Advisory Council has evidenced strong support for a complete associate-level education, some industries are apparently hiring students before the completion of their studies. In most cases, it is the general education component which students are missing when they take jobs prior to graduation. Such hires, unfortunately, likely undermine student's persistence through the entire program of studies. To counteract this situation, it may necessary for the campus to require the fulfillment of all general education courses before a student is permitted to enroll in specific P-Tech courses. A signed agreement among industrial partners not to hire students before program completion might also be beneficial. If these actions does not significantly increase student completer numbers, then the need for an A.A.S. program may have to be reconsidered in favor of the availability technical coursework only.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee receive the AY 2005-2006 report relative to the implementation of the A.A.S. in Process Technology at the Louisiana Technical College-Ascension. In order to affect higher numbers of program completers, the campus shall immediately institute a policy of completed required general education for the A.A.S. degree prior to student enrollment in any Process Technology courses. A subsequent progress report shall be submitted to the Associate Commissioner for Academic Affairs by December 1, 2007.